[124 cont.]

585 c) There is another very important fact in this sexual aspect of the fiesta that we are describing, which is what we might call proof of virginity. [125]

836 178 Virginity in woman is highly valued by the natives in spite of the fact that at the present time, due to economic acculturative factors, it is increasingly difficult to find virgins among marriageable women, a state of affairs that the Indian male is well aware of. But it is always a matter of pride and something to be boasted of for a Guajiro man to find on his marriage night that his bride is a virgin. It is the custom, 583 furthermore, that if the man marries not knowing that his wife has lost her virginity and has the consequent disillusion on his wedding night, the bride's relatives have to return a part of the livestock which the man paid for her, especially the family necklace. The Indian's concern about this matter, which remains hidden when he is in a normal state, comes to the surface during his drunken bouts, when he will sing about his wife, extolling 578 her and boasting of having had a virgin in his marriage hammock, 273 or insulting and degrading her in coarse improvisations when he considers that he has been defrauded.

524 196 This attitude toward sex on the part of the native, or better 89 said this value he places on the virginity of his future wives, is expressed in a sort of game which is played at the Dance of the Kid. To play it, the girls gather in a group about a singer who 538 sings such a song as this: "Let us see, my pretty miss, if you are a virgin, if truly you have not run around too freely, if no young male has put his hands on your body." He then passes his hands over each girl's body, tickling her. He starts at her big toe and goes upward, touching her instep, calves, knees, thighs, genitals, hips, stomach, torso, breasts, armpits, and continues up her neck until he reaches the top of her head. The girl who remains quiet, indifferent, without laughing and without even a smile wins the test and is declared a virgin. The singer then sings again: "You are indeed a virgin, my lovely majayura...," and chants a veritable song of flattery and finishes by escorting her to a set place. He then continues with the rest of the girls gathered there, repeating the same routine. When a girl moves or laughs,

S:Simons K-5 (ca. 1882) 1885
SC13 Goajiro SC13

[547] [544] weaving, making drums, hammocks, baskets, &c., sewing, and all the little knick-knacks Indians love so well.

The confinement is not so isolated as it seems, generally several of her female relations are round the door with the confined, who of course become rather stout, mouth blanched, almost white, and some exceedingly beautiful. Strangers and men are not excluded from peeping in through [580] the door, always with an eye to matrimony, and she can be sold and liberated at once, though her husband if rich prefers leaving her to complete her term of schooling. On re-entering to society again, a special festival, chicha, is held with dancing, &c. An ox is killed, and the girl is dressed in the clothes she has made; her hair is cut and she removes all her beads, necklaces, bracelets, and other ornaments.

562 [579] Women are much respected by the Goajiros. In a quarrel or drunken brawl, women often save bloodshed by stepping in and tearing the weapons out of their husband's or brother's hand. Travelling with women is consequently perfectly safe, and in case of danger, if one undertakes to protect a stranger, he may rely upon coming out all right.

583 Matrimony is a mere case of barter. The girl is sold for a certain price, fixed by the father. This is paid by the intended husband, and divided by the father, who appropriates the best part for himself and his relations, the rest going to the wife's relations. As it is chiefly in ● 585 cattle, these are killed and a kind of bridal festival held. There is no other ceremony. A wife is under obligation to support her husband, 593 find him in food, clothes, &c. She does most of the trading, and a [462] contract made with an Indian is worthless, should his better half object. An Indian cannot inflict bodily injury on his wife, for he becomes liable [581] to her relations, and should she die during childbirth he has to repay the father what he gave for her. But if the wife is untrue (a rare occurrence) he demands from the father the price he paid for her, who if he [589] cannot refund, helps him to recover from the seducer, plus fine or compensation from his mother-in-law. At the husband's death, the 587 wife becomes a legacy to his brother, usually the youngest; if there are 769 none, then his nephew inherits her. The daughter of a chief is worth, according to his wealth and power (i. e. the number of men he can 583 dispose of in a fight) from 6 to 150 head of cattle (12l. to 300l.).

764 When a person dies, a grand drinking festival is given, that lasts as long as there is anything to drink—days, and even weeks, with the wealthy. These latter are buried twice, and have two festivals. A rich person is always buried in the garden, and on the spot where he was born; being often carried for that purpose immense distances. A fire is lighted every night from sunset to sunrise in front of the grave, for the sole use of the dead. Immense piles of wood are gathered for this purpose, as the body is kept two years in the house. Then all the relations can meet on a certain day, and the second feast takes place, when the bones are carefully gathered, placed in a jar, and consigned to the

7:Bollinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

bride-price. (A refusal by the girl's family to accept the offerings can lead to a serious conflict between the two families.) The deputation then returns home and informs the suitor. He does not try to haggle. That is not done. Also he has a fairly good idea beforehand what he will be asked to pay. If his relatives can afford it, the price is paid in a lump sum in cows, which is the grandest method of payment. The cows are driven to the bride's house by slaves and followed by the bridegroom's maternal uncles, who are responsible for making settlement. They are given a festive reception and return with gifts of meat from a freshly slaughtered animal. The bridegroom does not go on this occasion either. He arrives later with some cows for his mother-in-law, which constitute a reward for the bridal bed, a beautiful hammock she has woven. This symbolizes his right of possession of the girl.

In the old days it was considered that a bride ought to be virgin, although now that manners are not so strict, this is not so strictly insisted upon. The white man usually explains the girl's period of confinement as being intended to preserve her innocence; yet she would surely have more opportunity to kick over the traces when living by herself in a little hut, than if she were with her family and always under their eye. Among the better families at least, a husband can demand return of part of the bride-price if he discovers that he is not the first to enjoy the girl's favours. A bride who is not a virgin should thus command a lower price than a virgin. A girl with a child, or a wife another man has returned, commands even less, just as with the Moors, though that is not to say that the custom came from them.

Nowadays a sensible girl tells her intended husband if she has had an affair, before the bride-price is settled, and thereby complications are avoided. A young man will seldom hesitate to marry a girl making such a confession.

A man's inmost thoughts often emerge under the influence of intoxication, when he sits in his hammock improvising a song, as the Indians do. Sorrowfully he may chant: 'Ah, ah, ah, ah, when I married my wife was not a maid.' If she was, he will sing: 'Ah, ah, ah, my bride was innocent.'

?:Bolinder T-5 (1926, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

585 Maruma said that while she is in confinement a girl will
[581] have been taught, among other things, the attentions cus-
tom requires her to show her husband.

When he arrives home, she learns to hang up his ham-
587 mock and offer him something to drink. She at once prepares
a meal, if one is not yet ready. The master of the house has
[261] his own crockery, from which he alone eats, and his wife
must see that he has his favourite dishes and that they are
properly cooked. If he has returned from a journey or from
hunting, she must see that he has water to wash in and a
clean guayuco. Once he has taken his place in the hammock,
she sits on the ground and tells him the day's events. If he
falls asleep, she sits in silence.

When the husband's friends or other people come to see
[574] him, the wife's place is again on the ground beside his
hammock. She does not butt in upon the men's conversa-
tion, but knows how to be amusing if she is spoken to. She
must see that each guest has a hammock to rest in and offer
everyone refreshments. Men are proud to have such a
hostess for a wife.

[574] In the husband's absence a wife must receive visitors
courteously, but observe caution, if they are men. She will
hang a hammock under a roofed shelter close to the house,
but will not let the visitor inside. She will then offer him
refreshments and sit down beside his hammock with some
handwork.

It goes without saying that she must take good care of her
husband's belongings and property, for he is often forced
[570] to be away with his herds. She must also take care of her
husband himself, when he is drunk, as he not infrequently
is. When fights occur at feasts, the women, as we know,
[571] throw themselves between the men to avoid bloodshed. A
wife is responsible for her husband, when he is drunk. If
she has not bothered to keep an eye on him and he is beaten
[563] or killed, the fault is hers. Or he may take his own life
while intoxicated—suicide for mere trifles is not unusual—
and then too she can be held responsible, if she has not
intervened. If he loses her or destroys any of her things
while he is drunk, she knows that he will make rich amends

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

great ring and several of them were wiping their mouths in evident satisfaction—presumably having just been regaled with some drink.

The drum thundered a long time in vain before a young Indian stepped into the ring, removed his cloak and sandals and began to walk round in a circle—a challenge to the members of the fair sex.

Almost at once a girl appeared in the ring; removed her sandals and held her tunic spread wide with her hands. The two then began dancing: he in front, she a few yards behind. Suddenly the man gave a shout and the tempo increased. Turning swiftly the girl came sweeping down towards the man who danced away, moving backwards. She must try to get close enough to tramp on his feet and make him fall, but she must not barge him. If she managed to make her partner fall, there was great jubilation, and then a new couple took the stage. Otherwise, the girl would probably challenge her partner to a few more turns, while he answered contemptuously:

'Fetch your little sister.' (Inferring that she would manage better.)

In this way a dance continues without interruption, couple following couple. It could go on for weeks.

The well-bred Indian considers the chichamaya the only suitable dance. The monks also approved of it, since it was perfectly decent, the two dancers remaining apart the whole time. The dance is not genuinely Indian, containing both Spanish and African features, but even in its present form it retains its religious-magical significance and is part of the ritual used in certain family ceremonies and on other important occasions.

The dance of the kid is a pure folk dance. It is really a whole complex of games, dances and typical fertility rites. The good families do not allow their daughters to attend them. The law's strict sexual prohibition does not apply to those taking part in the dance of the kid, who enjoy an otherwise forbidden erotic licence. This is not approved of by the well-to-do, who still hold by the rule that a bride should be a virgin, since it can have an effect on the bride-price.

8:Armstrong & Métraux E-4 (no date) 1948
SC13 Goajiro SC13

water but is given an herbal purgative. Her hair is cut short. Generally several of her relatives stay around the door of the hut, and strangers and men with an eye to matrimony may look in. During this period the girl is taught the duties of married life and such skills as weaving, sewing, and making hammocks. When she emerges, stout and bleached, a special festival is held, when she resumes her ornaments and puts on the adult clothes that she has made during her confinement. She is now considered marriageable. The length of her confinement depends on her status, though theoretically it lasts until her hair again reaches the nape of her neck. Poor girls are secluded only a few weeks, rich girls up to 2 years.

Sexual life and marriage.—Little is known about the sexual life of the *Goajiro*. A certain amount of promiscuous love making occurs among the young people at the biweekly festivals. Dances also provide an opportunity for sexual advances.

There are some male transvestites who carry on only female activities and are ridiculed by the men.

When a man desires to marry he sends his father or uncle as intermediary, then pays a bride price which has been set by the girl's relatives. The payment is usually in cattle, but goats, pearls, liquor, cotton cloth, and gold ornaments also are used. The father retains the purchase price only when his first daughter marries; the income of subsequent marriages goes to the girl's senior maternal uncles. The mother also receives part of the income. A son obtains the cattle for the bride payment from the increase of his father's herds.

Intermarriage between the sibs is frequent, and many of the *Goajiro* give their daughters to "civilizados" from Maracaibo and Rio Hacha, who pay higher prices and find such a tie with the Indians useful in their trading relations.

The marriage ceremony consists of a series of feasts and exchanges of presents between the two families. The wedding night is spent at the ranchería of the bride's mother, but the nuptial hammock (specially woven by the female relatives of the bride) is hung from a tree some distance away from the house. For a period of days and even months the bridegroom leaves his bride at dawn and returns only after sunset. In this way the groom shows respect to his mother-in-law.

Polygyny is general. The number of wives depends on the economic status of the husband, some men having as many as 20. Each wife lives in her own house, where her husband occasionally visits her. The man, as head of the polygynous household, supervises the daily slaughter of animals and the distribution of meat and corn to each household according to the number of its members.

If a wife shirks her domestic duties she may be divorced and her husband may claim the return of the bride price cattle, plus their increase and

9: Santa Cruz E-5 (1958) 1960
SC13 Goajiro SC13

The whole judiciary structure with its elaborate system of torts is based on the payment of a given number of domestic animals. There is no crime, including murder, that cannot be amicably settled by such payments (Petrullo, 1937). The acquisition of a bride is also reduced to the payment of a stipulated price, in terms of domestic animals, to be given to the maternal uncle of the girl.

Social, economic, and political status in the Guajiro society is intimately connected with the cattle complex. To have a high status an individual needs, primarily, two assets: he must possess a large number of domestic animals, in other words, he must be considered rich; and he must be an older man. If he lacks either of these requisites, he is not a leader, as he will not be sufficiently respected nor will members of his clan come to him to seek his advice. Consequently, leaders are not numerous in the Guajiro peninsula. The present writer knows only two individuals, both in Venezuela, who are today the unquestionable leaders of their respective clans. These men are Panchito Silva, of the Pushaina clan, and José de la Rosa Fernandez of the Uriana clan.

An analysis of the lives of these two men will be illustrative of the traditional methods of acquiring status among the Guajiro.

Panchito Silva, a man of about 80 years of age, lives in the native village of Sinkipes in Venezuela. During his life-time he has had eight wives (two or three at a time) and now lives with his surviving two, one about 35 years old and the other about 50. He is a full-blooded Indian as has been the case of his wives. There is no trace of race mixture in his family. He has no clear idea of how many children he has had, apart from those living with him now (two men and five women). Yet he knows definitely that he has four younger brothers—who will inherit his wealth and position before these are passed on to his nephews—three sisters and twenty-five nephews and nieces (all sons and daughters of his sisters). His lack of concern towards his own children coupled with his keen interest in his nephews and nieces seems to be a clear indication of how strong the avunculate is in traditional Guajiro society. His holdings in cattle and other domestic animals are very large. Roughly he owns around 1,000 head of cattle and about 3,000 of sheep,

9: Santa Cruz E-5 (1958) 1960
SC13 Goajiro SC13

office expired (in two years time) he sought and obtained a position in the Federal Ministry of Public Works in a project which was seeking the best places to drill water wells all over the Guajira peninsula. He held this job for about a year and half. He is now employed in the Guajira office, in Paraguaipoa, of the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry and is "ad honorem" agent of the Comisión Indigenista in the Guajira. In these two jobs he gets paid only when he performs certain work, such as when he recently acted as guide and interpreter for the present writer.

During his term as Prefect of Paez (Sinamaica) he married, according to the Guajira tradition and law, one of the daughters of To'olito Fernandez, for whom he had to pay a very high price, as the girl was the daughter of an important chief. Following Guajira law the price for the bride was gathered among the members of the Uriana clan to which Perez belongs due to his mother's heritage. Incidentally, as Fernandez also belongs to the Uriana clan he had to contribute in the collection of the bride-price of his own daughter although, of course, the amount collected did not go to him but to the girl's maternal uncle. This was a typical exogamous marriage as the girl belongs to the Guajariyú clan, that being her mother's clan. At present, Perez keeps two households, one in Maracaibo with his white wife and son, whom he visits once or twice a week, if he is not doing any special work for the ministries; the other, is his native household at the Laguna del Pajaro, Guajira, where he remains most of his time. He has had no children with his Indian wife. His two simultaneous marriages have brought him no trouble with the law, as according to Guajiro tradition polygyny is perfectly acceptable, and according to Venezuelan law he has only one legitimate wife.

It is interesting to note at this point that Perez denies having a white wife in Maracaibo, although he does not deny having the son and shows pride in saying that his son is in medical school. The present writer was not able to fathom the reasons behind this denial. Data regarding his Maracaibo marriage was obtained from Perez's father who was also unable to furnish good motives for the fact that Perez tries to hide that he has a household in that city. To test this point the writer, after the